

## Winter Driving

We are into the winter months and holiday travels and the temperature and weather conditions are presenting roller coaster type patterns. Since the weather is still somewhat comfortable to be out in, it is probably a good opportunity to check your vehicle and make sure it is in good operating condition and prepared for inclement weather. Your inspection should include; all lights are operable, windshield wipers in good condition and not torn or rotting, defroster and heater are working, and tires properly inflated and in good condition. What about emergency supplies that you might carry?

When we talk about emergency supplies, each driver should carry at a minimum; blanket, flashlight, jumper cables, bottles of water, and miscellaneous packaged food or snack items. Also a good idea is to insure your cell phone car charger is carried. It would not hurt to carry a bag of cat litter or sand in the event your tires can not get traction. Let your imagination dictate what you might need on a cold night on the side of a road or in a ditch. If you must remain stuck or stranded in your vehicle for an extended period of time, be very cautious of carbon monoxide emissions and keep a window slightly open and insure the exhaust pipe is not blocked or clogged by mud or snow.

Now that your vehicle equipment has been checked and your vehicle stocked with possible emergency needs, what about the actual driving techniques? Moisture and cold temperatures have an impact on road conditions. Drivers must recognize that stopping distances greatly increase on damp or slick surfaces. Leave plenty of distance between the vehicles ahead of you. If you have to stop quickly and your vehicle is equipped with Antilock Braking Systems (ABS), it is recommended you apply the brake firmly and NOT pump the brakes. If your vehicle is not ABS equipped, remember to pump your brakes so you can better control the vehicles path. Vehicle speed during inclement weather must be reduced to meet the conditions of the road. A cautious driver will anticipate possible hazards and adjust their vehicle operation with those hazards in mind. Drive cautious and defensively.

Remember in freezing temperatures to turn your wipers off using the control knob and not just turning the car off and stopping the wipers. If the wipers stick to the windshield and the next time you turn the car on, the wipers may suffer damage – wipers and lights are necessary equipment.